

## [J. W. Wilson]

[???] [Dup?]

### FORM A Circumstances of Interview

NAME OF WORKER Harold J. Moss ADDRESS 6934 Francis

DATE September 23, 1938 SUBJECT American Folklore

1. Name and address of informant J. W. Wilson, 2336 No. 70th, City
2. Date and time of interview Sept. 23 8:30 a. m. to 11:30 a. m.
3. Place of interview Home of informant
4. Name and address of person, if any, who put you in touch with informant None
5. Name and address of person, if any, accompanying you None
6. Description of room, house surroundings, etc. Dining room comfortably furnished, some mid-Victorian atmosphere. House reflects the personality of these early Nebraska [?], good, clean, righteous and reminiscent of many years of harmony and tranquility.  
Surroundings

semi-rural and restful. C15 - 2[??]41 [??]

### FORM B Personal History of Informant

NAME OF WORKER Harold J. Moss ADDRESS 6934 Francis

DATE Sept. 23, 1938 SUBJECT American Folklore—Nebr.

## Library of Congress

NAME AND ADDRESS OF INFORMANT J. W. Wilson, 2336 North [?], Lincoln

1. Ancestry North of Ireland, Protestant-Irish
2. Place and date of birth Pendleton, Indiana— Oct. 6, 1856
3. Family Wife and 4 children, all living
4. Places lived in, with dates Pendleton, Indiana 1856-1869, Iowa, 1869-1870, Yutan, Nebr., 1870-1893 Lincoln or Bathany 1893 to date.
5. Education, with dates Country school in Indiana, 1863-[?], Country school in Nebraska, 1871-1874.
6. Occupations and accomplishments, with dates Farmer and stock-raiser, 1870-1893. farmer Farmer and various work with horses, 1893-[?]
7. Special skills and interests Agriculture and stock
8. community and religious activities Christian church, elder in church, active in promoting good moral standards and neighborly relations.
9. Description of informant Serious minded. Average physical build, a rather Yankee type, six feet tall, spare, regular features.
10. Other points gained in interview Mr. Wilson in very religious and against liquor in any form. He likes hard work, enjoyed the hardships of his pioneer youth and is very sensitive with some prejudices. Believes the people of today do not put their heart into the things they undertake and that their religious activities lack the spontaneous enthusiasm and spirit that was previously there.

FORM C Text of Interview (Unedited)

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NAME OF WORKER Harold J. Moss ADDRESS 6934 Francis

DATE September 23, 1938 SUBJECT American Folklore

NAME AND ADDRESS OF INFORMANT J. W. Wilson 2336 North 70th Lincoln

We traveled by wagon from Council Bluffs, Iowa, through the bottom gumbo to the ferry at Plattsmouth. They put the wagons on the outside and the horses on the inside on the ferry, when crossing the Missouri.

It was May 28, 1870 when we reached the farm we were going to take south of Yutan.

The Free Land in Nebraska attracted a good many 'skippers' who would file on the land for speculation.

They would sell out and soon did to the staunch heroic men and women who came to make their homes there. The heart of America's finest people was breaking loose to come to the freedom of the west.

I remember when Thompson Bissell of [Wahoo?] Creek first brought Texas Longhorn cattle to our neighborhood to fatten. They were rangy, poor and had horns about four feet across. They wouldn't eat corn and did not know what it was. In order to get them to eat, Bissell got some native northern cattle and placed them all together. The steers soon got the idea alright.

The Indians, who called themselves, 'heap good Omaha', used to come from the Platte river islands and ask for flour and coffee. That was what they wanted all the time. We never had coffee and very seldom flour. We used to roast or burn wheat in the oven and make 'coffee' from that.

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No one had any money. The neighbors all pitched in and traded work or if someone was in need they would help them and no work was expected in return.

The people were not so crazy for money and as a rule took much more interest in one another. The first school house in our community was all built by volunteer work.

There were only a few books. One being a McGuffey speller. Everyone nearly could spell good and was good at reading. The arithmetic was all mental which I thin think is the better way to teach it at first. Our teacher walked [15?] miles on Friday to his place and 15 miles back again, Monday morning. I rode over there one time to get a doctor, we didn't have a doctor much even at child birth.

People seemed to be healthier and they used Home Remedies a great deal. They believed that God had planted in the earth things to cure all illness if they could be found. My wife's brother had a 'white swelling.' Hip joint disease. He tried the doctors for a long time but only got worse. His mother said she would cure him. So she went out and dug 'Yellow Dock' and picked sarsiparilla, made a tea and added brown sugar. His hip finally healed and his blood cleared and he was well again. Tansy tea was used a lot as a remedy and skunk oil.

Doctors said 'they always got better till they died.'

Our first church was in the schoolhouse. A United Brethern minister used to preach the gospel there. I remember one time the mosquitoes were so bad the preacher cut and pulled green slough grass and leaves and built smudge fires all around the school house to keep the mosquitoes away.

The people were "hungry" for church and the gospel, old and young. The early preachers were pioneer heroes who put up with hardships and sometimes were ridiculed and blasphemed by the ungodly. There were no song books except one the preacher had. He would read the first line or two lines and tell the congregation the measure, long, short or

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common. The people would sing them to the time set for that measure. Then the preacher read two more lines and so on through the hymn. (It went like this:) The preacher would read: 'Let the Redeemers name be sung, Through every land by every tongue:

The congregation would sing it then. They had a spirit and understanding of what they sung. Now they don't sing with such feeling. We all went to singing school and were taught the rudiments of music. The singing master ha had a tuning fork to got the proper pitch. I remember one piece: 'twenty froggies went to school Down beside the rushy pool Twenty little coats of green Twenty vests all white and clean. We must be on time said they First we study then we play. Master Bull Frog brave and stern Called their classes in their turn, Twenty Froggies grew up fast Great Frogs they became at last Now they sit on other logs Teaching other little Frogs.

The leader used to give you the scale pieces like this: 'Greedy boys eat apples down greedily.'

The people were always helpful and kind and when death came to a neighbor's house, they would come and sit up all night with the dead.

There were no undertakers and the neighbor friends helped to take care of the body.

In hot weather the funeral would be held the next day as the corpse would not keep. I have seen them cut green branches and twigs to cover the coffin or box and keep it cooler as it was hauled along in an open wagon.

Some of the neighbors would to to the cemetery and dig the grave. They would wait there until the procession arrived and then take part in the services.

The funeral procession moved slow and solemn. Sometimes they would dig the pit extra big and then two men, one at each end, would get down in the grave and reach up and lower the coffin. Sometimes they used the lines off from one of the teams.

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The Ad Carr cemetery which was nearest has many people buried there, who are now forgotten and the graves unmarked.

In 1874 we had a bad year. The grasshoppers came in August in a great cloud, which darkened the sun and there was a jarring and a roar in the whole atmosphere. They completely covered every inch of surface and eat the fence posts even. When scared they always flew southeast.

Everyone feared the big red rusty prairie rattlesnakes. Our dog was bitten many times and he always went to the slough and laid in the mud until he was over it.

People walked lots and I have seen 'Old man Bryan' go by carrying a 'stirrin' plow' on his shoulder. He would go fifteen miles this way.

It was said he buried lots of money on his farm, which was part [of?] a big orchard near Ashland, Nebraska.

We always planted root crops in the dark of the moon after a full moon. If we wanted big tops top crops we planted in the light of the moon. People used to say that 'Frost in the light of the moon would not hurt.' I thought this was a little silly.

One weather saying was: 'Rainbow in the morning, Sailors take warning; Rainbow at night, Sailor's delight.'

There was a haunted house not far from our place. For some years no one would use it or go near it. A man finally rented it just to see if this was true. He went in and laid down to sleep and sure enough he heard noises in the attic and something walking around. The noise then came from the wall and finally was gone. Next day he found a large opening in the foundation. He set a trap and the next morning had a big double-striped skunk. That ended the ghost scare.

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The people had a good many odd expressions and sayings then. I know they called 'onions', 'ingeruns' although we did not all use the same expressions. There were a lot of Irish 'paddies' working on a grading job that I drove team for. I was a 'skinner' to them and some of the shovelers were called 'grunts.' We thought of these Irish as 'flannel mouth' Irish, because it was said they drank lots and their mouths always looked like a big red ring.

There were many hardships and painful things in those days but I would prefer it to the easy life of today.

### FORM D Supplementary

Mr. Wilson and his wife are a splendid example of an ideal American couple, who lived in Nebraska through all these years and grew up with the state. They had been married sixty years. While their education was limited Mr. Wilson has an unusually good vocabulary and is above average intelligence.

There is an old story appropos of the minister leading the responsive singing in church as set to the indicated meter. He had forgotten his glasses and could read the lines from his hymn book, so he endeavored to tell the congregation about it but unconsciously used the meter of one of the songs and which the congregation mistook for the hymn itself. 'my eyes are dim, I cannot see I left my specs to home'

The congregation sang it. Somewhat flustered the preacher tried to explain. 'I did not mean that you should sing, I only meant my eyes were dim.'

And again the congregation sang. Just how he got them stopped and put over his idea is not know.

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“Don't Fret Your Spleen” and “I don't give a continental” were two old time expressions. Continental symbolized something of no value, referring of course to the old continental scrip once used for money and becoming worthless at a later date.

An old tongue tying test for young orators and speakers used to start as follows:

“Theopolus Thistle, the successful Thistler Thistle sifter, sifted three thousand thistles thru the thick of his thumb.”